

VZCZCXYZ0001
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHPG #0647/01 2811439
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 071439Z OCT 08
FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0735
INFO RUEHXQ/ALL EUROPEAN UNION POST COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAMDA/MDA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 000647

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/06/2018
TAGS: [OVIP](#) [CMGT](#) [CVIS](#) [EUN](#) [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [EZ](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S OCTOBER 6 MEETING WITH CZECH DPM
VONDRA

Classified By: Ambassador Richard Graber, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: During his October 6 meeting with Czech DPM Alexandr Vondra, the Ambassador raised PM Topolanek's upcoming meeting with President Bush and DHS Secretary Chertoff's upcoming visit to the Czech Republic. The Czechs intend to invite the next U.S. President to an EU-U.S. summit in Prague early in 2009. Vondra was vague on the timetable and strategy for winning ratification of missile defense legislation in parliament. Vondra agreed that parliamentary support for missile defense is very close, possibly riding on a single undecided MP. End Summary.

PM Topolanek,s Upcoming U.S. Trip

12. (C) Vondra said PM Topolanek wants to use his October 29 meeting with President Bush to thank him for visa waiver and discuss missile defense and the Czech Republic,s upcoming EU Presidency. Topolanek plans to visit Afghanistan October 28, and then fly that same day to Washington. (Separately, MFA officials told us October 6 that Topolanek will also visit Cuban opposition groups in Florida during his trip.)

Visa Waiver

13. (C) The Ambassador told Vondra that DHS Secretary Chertoff would visit the Czech Republic October 27. The Ambassador stressed that visa waiver is an important public diplomacy opportunity for both countries and we should take advantage of it. Vondra is determined to go on the first Czech Airlines flight after visa waiver takes effect, together with Interior Minister Langer and some older former dissidents. The Ambassador cautioned Vondra that visa waiver may not apply if he travels on an official passport; Vondra replied he would travel on a tourist passport.

Vondra,s Plans for His U.S. Trip

14. (C) Vondra thinks his travel to the U.S. will be around November 18. He plans to meet with staffers for both current Presidential candidates, no matter who wins the election. His goal is to invite the next U.S. President to a summit in Prague early during the Czech EU Presidency.

15. (C) Vondra told the Ambassador that French President Sarkozy plans to travel to Washington in December to issue a similar invitation, but to Brussels instead of Prague. Vondra thinks a Prague trip would allow the Czechs to shape an agenda more favorable to good transatlantic ties. Vondra hopes that such a meeting would take place in early spring, possibly in conjunction with the April NATO Summit in Strasbourg.

Parliamentary Strategy on Missile Defense

¶16. (C) Vondra was vague on the date of the first reading of missile defense legislation in the lower house of parliament, although he said it would be in October. He appears to want to defer a first reading until after the last round of local elections on October 24-25. After the first reading, Vondra said the government would get Senate approval, and then wait until we have 101 (votes in favor)⁸ to have the second reading in the lower chamber, at which time a vote will be taken.

¶17. (C) Vondra speculated that the Constitutional Court would issue a decision on the Lisbon Treaty in October and that there could be a deal involving the Treaty and missile defense.

¶18. (C) Vondra was also vague when pressed on parliamentary rules, such as the difficulty of shortening the debate period, an option the government has floated. He was also unsure whether the opposition could demand a vote on the first reading of missile defense legislation.

Parliamentary Support for Missile Defense

¶19. (C) Vondra agreed with the Ambassador that support for missile defense in the lower house is razor-thin, possibly riding on a single undecided coalition Christian Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-CSL) MP, Ludvik Hovorka. He agreed that the Embassy would do well to reach out to Hovorka and other MPs.

¶10. (C) Vondra said he has been talking to main opposition Social Democrats (CSSD) about missile defense and would continue to do so, and that he had also discussed it with coalition partner Green Party chair Martin Bursik. Bursik and Vondra continue to try to persuade Green Party MP and current Education Minister Ondrej Liska to vote in favor of missile defense. To date, those efforts have been unsuccessful.

¶11. (C) MFA officials and a former CSSD member have told us recently that CSSD leader Paroubek has at least temporarily de-emphasized missile defense as an election issue in favor of economic and social issues. MFA Security Policy Department Director Veronika Kuchynova-Smigolova speculated on October 6 that Paroubek senses he may have to let it pass.⁸
Graber